2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A Wll Kerala A Wll
Central Kerala Nayar

177 nese (from at least the sixth century) and after 1498 the Portuguese, followed by the English, Dutch, and French (Logan, 1951, I: 251–254, 258, 294–399).

133 The coast falls roughly into three natural divisions: the coastal strip, the midlands, and the highlands rising into the Ghats (cf. Buchanan, [245] 1807: 565–566). The coastal strip is flat and sandy. Its chief product is coconuts, with some rice and bananas. In the southern half it is [243] broken by salt-water lagoons which for over a hundred miles form a continuous navigable chain parallel to the sea. Most of the chief 361 towns are situated on the coast, divided by chains of little fishing vil- [487] lages. Many of the coast towns are ancient, and most of them lie at the mouths of navigable rivers which flow westward from the Ghats. [439] From time immemorial raw materials, chiefly pepper, were brought by boat from the inland hillsides for shipment from these ports.

133 The midlands comprise low hills and fertile valleys. Broad strips of alluvial rice lands lie in the valleys, thinning out as the land rises 245 into the foothills of the Ghats. On the hill slopes are gardens of co- conut palms, bananas, pepper, ginger, and many fruit trees such as [439] jack and mango. It was probably wild pepper which was exported in Roman times, but pepper and other spices have been deliberately [177] cultivated at least since 1290 (Ricci, 1931: 328). Cashew nuts, introduced by the Portuguese, formed an additional export crop. Small 361 merchant settlements, market-centers, and the military fortifications of 443 petty chiefs existed at strategic points on river banks. Some of these centers grew into bazaar towns in the nineteenth century. But the mass of the population traditionally lived, as today, in scattered village communities on garden land surrounding or surrounded by fields 243 of wet rice, the main subsistence crop. Wet-rice cultivation depended 231 on plough agriculture with teams of oxen or water buffalo. Goats and chickens were the other significant domestic animals.

361 The highlands rising into the Ghats were covered mainly by de- [133] ciduous forests. The foothills, interspersed with occasional rice flats, were sparsely populated by people of the same cultural groups as [241] those in the plains. They eked out their wet-rice cultivation with gar- [224] den crops of fruits, spices, and vegetables, with shifting hoe cultivation of dry grains on hillsides, and with forest hunting of elephant, deer, and pig. Higher in the mountains lived primitive tribes of hunters and shifting cultivators, having only occasional contacts with the kingdoms of the plains.

132 Throughout most of the area Kerala's rainfall varies between 75 and 170 inches, being heaviest in the north where the mountains are

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date)
1909 AW11 Kerala AW11
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company of Nāyars for the honour of the Valluvanad Rāja. And probably the frantic fanatical rush of the Māppillas on British bayonets, which is not even yet a thing of the past, is the latest development of this ancient custom of the Nāyars. The martial spirit of the Nāyars in these piping times of peace has quite died out for want of exercise. The Nāyar is more and more becoming a family man. Comparatively few of them now-a-days even engage in hunting." According to an inscription of the King Kulōttunga I (A.D. 1083-84), he conquered Kudamalai-Nadu, *i.e.*, the western hill country (Malabar), whose warriors, the ancestors of the Nāyars of the present day, perished to the last man in defending their independence.*

The following description of the Nāyars at the beginning of the sixteenth century is given by Duarte Barbosa.† "The Nairs are the gentry, and have no other duty than to carry on war, and they continually carry their arms with them, which are swords, bows, arrows, bucklers, and lances. They all live with the kings, and some of them with other lords, relations of the kings, and lords of the country, and with the salaried governors, and with one another. They are very smart men, and much taken up with their nobility. . . . These Nairs, besides being all of noble descent, have to be armed as knights by the hand of a king or lord with whom they live, and until they have been so equipped they cannot bear arms nor call themselves Nairs. . . . In general, when they are seven years of age, they are immediately sent to school to learn all manner of feats of agility and gymnastics for the use of their weapons.

* E. Hultzsch, South-Indian Inscriptions, III, 2, 1203.

† Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar. Translation. Hakluyt Society, 1866.